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## An emoji of their own: League City firm creates images for people with disabilities

By LAURA ELDER May 21, 2015



LEAGUE CITY - A League City firm has created a new line of emojis — those little cartoon characters used to convey emotions in texts and emails — for people with disabilities.

Katrina Parrott, who in 2013 made headlines in the tech world for creating racially diverse emojis through her company Cub Club Investments, under the product name iDiversicons, added 14 new emojis to her line that depict people in

wheelchairs doing everything from fishing to graduating. iDiversicons plans to add an amputee runner, an amputee weight lifter and others as it gains financing.

The emojis for people with disabilities became available for sale in Apple's App Store this month.

"Nobody was doing any emojis with people with disabilities," Parrott said. "There are 1 billion people in the world with disabilities."

The iDiversicon app, which sells for \$1.99, offers more than 900 emojis. Parrott would like to add more than 300 more emojis representing people with disabilities, but needs to raise funding for her young company, she said.

"We want to represent the world, not just one ethnicity," Parrott said.

Greg Smith, a motivational speaker who was born with Muscular Dystrophy, is helping champion emojis for people with disabilities, Parrott said.

Parrott is filling a void in the emoji market that has long ignored people with disabilities, she said. She wanted to show people with disabilities that someone cared enough about them to do something special so they'll be included in emojis.

Parrott has financed her firm with her own money. In June 2013, she was laid off from NASA, where she had managed logistics contracts. Parrott's daughter, Katy, who is soon to graduate from University of Texas at Austin, where she was a premed student, was home in League City sending text messages on her smartphone. Katy wondered aloud why emojis lacked racial and cultural diversity and a business was born.

Katrina Parrott is trying to reach out to investors and has launched a GoFundMe account to raise money. iDiversicons are compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch.

Parrott has played a role in changing the Unicode Standard by becoming a member of the technical committee of the Unicode Consortium, a nonprofit organization of technology companies that sets standards for software and cellular products.

"Mrs. Parrott played a very influential role in the development of emoji in Unicode 8.0 and beyond," said Mark Davis, president of the Unicode Consortium.

"She was a key contributor to the diversity emoji that will be released in June and have already appeared in products, and to proposals for additional emoji in general."

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## **Online**

Visit http://www.gofundme.com/whydisabilityemoji for information about iDiversicons GoFundMe campaign

To view iDiversicons' emojis, visit https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/idiversicons.-worlds-first/id947572946? mt=8

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